NOAA ELP Funding Opportunity Teleconference
September 23, 2021
3:00 pm ET

Coordinator: Welcome, and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question-and-answer session of today's conference. At that time, you may press Star 1 on your phone to ask a question. I'd like to inform all parties, today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I would now like to turn the conference over to Carrie McDougall. Thank you. You may begin.

Carrie McDougall: Hello, and welcome, everyone, to our September 23rd 2021 informational teleconference for NOAA's fiscal year 2022 Environmental Literacy Programs grant funding announcement. If you're attending this telecon today, you don't need to attend the one on September 27. We will cover the same material in both, and we will post transcripts of both telecons.

As the operator said, I am Carrie McDougall, and I'm one of the federal program officers for this funding opportunity. And I'm going to hand it over now to my two colleagues, who you'll hear from later, to introduce themselves. I'll start with John.

John McLaughlin: Hi, all. I'm John McLaughlin, a Program Officer with the Office of Education for the Environmental Literacy Program.

Carrie McDougall: Thanks.

Sarah Schoedinger: Hi. And I'm Sarah Schoedinger, another Program Officer with the Office of Education.

Carrie McDougall: Okay. So, the three of us will be reviewing the teleconference today. And other members of our team who you may hear from later on in the Q&A period, are Maggie Beetstra, Christopher Nelson, and Maggie Allen. So, this whole conference is being transcribed, and we will post the transcription of today's call to our frequently asked questions or FAQ Web site, by September 30th. So, if you can't practically keep up with notes, you'll be able to see a transcript in about a week.

So, what we'll be doing today is beginning with an overview of the 2022 Environmental Literacy Program funding opportunity. Specifically, we're going to be looking at priority one, and then we'll be taking your questions. As the operator indicated, all participants are muted for this first part of the teleconference.

And once we complete the funding opportunity overview, then you'll indicate you have a question per the operator's instructions, which we will give at the end, and you will enter the question queue. And when the operator indicates, you will be unmuted and able to ask your questions. So, we'll be fielding questions verbally at the end of the call.

We will be overviewing the published funding opportunity with you. And so, you'll want to have a way you can view that document, either on your computer or print it out. To make sure you're looking at the correct opportunity, it should be titled, Environmental Literacy Program, Increasing Community Resilience to Extreme Weather and Climate Change. We'll cover how to get a copy if you don't have one already in a minute.

As we go along, please note any questions you have, and we'll take those questions after we complete our overview. So, if you don't already have a copy of the notice of funding opportunity, also known as - by the acronym NOFO, you want to go to grants.gov using an internet browser, and click on the search grants tab in the upper corner.

Next, you'll see three basic search criteria, and you can use any of these criteria to find the current opportunity. For example, you can type environmental literacy into the keyword area, or you can type 11.008 into the CFDA number field. And then when you get the search return, you want to make sure you're clicking on the funding opportunity number, which is NOAA-SEC-OED-2022-2006995.

Once you click on this funding opportunity, it will lead to a page called View Grant Opportunity. And you can see there, it starts with a synopsis of the opportunity in the middle of the screen. And there's some basic information provided about the funding opportunity there.

But one thing we want to draw your attention to, is that the closing date that is shown on this

synopsis tab, is the last of three deadlines that are associated with this funding opportunity. We are, in this telecom, focusing on the pre-applications for priority one, which has the first of the three deadlines of November 1, 2021, although you don't see that deadline shown on the synopsis page.

If you click on the tab called package, here you will see that there are three different application packages for the different components of this competition. Note the different deadlines here. So, again, you'll see the pre-application package for priority one for competition ID 299715, and that one shows the deadline of November 1, 2021.

Now, if you click on the tab called related documents, you will see a tab with links to the full announcement. Sorry, a table with links to the full announcement. Click on the second full announcement link, which will open a PDF version of the funding opportunity. This is the document we will be overviewing today.

Note, we may need to make minor updates to this funding opportunity. So, we recommend that you sign up to receive updates through grants.gov. And that way, you'll automatically be notified if we make any updates to the funding opportunity. So, again, the notice of funding opportunity, or NOFO for short, is the primary document that you should use to guide your application construction and submission.

This funding opportunity is soliciting two types of projects through separate competitive priorities. Priority one will support new projects from the applicants serving audiences in the central and eastern regions of the United States. Priority two will support the continued evolution of past projects funded through the Environmental Literacy Program, and in the funding solicitation with the eligible project.

This telecon is for priority one. If you are eligible for priority two, we are hosting a teleconference on October 28th, where we will cover the details for that priority. Due to very high demand for these grants, in 2020, we decided to limit applicants to those in about half of the States.

This geographic restriction limits the number of applications that can be submitted, and thereby increases the odds of an application being successful and receiving funding. In 2020,

the competition solicited proposals from the western and southern regions of the United States, and all United States territories. Although we did not make awards in all eligible states due to funding limitations, we are now focusing on the other half of the country, or the eastern and central regions.

These regions include the following States: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

The entirety of the project must only serve audiences located in one or more of the listed States. This geographic restriction pertains to the audiences that will be served, and not on where the submitting organization is based. So, your institution could be in a State that is not eligible, but if the project will be serving audiences only in eligible States, then the project would be eligible.

So, for example, let's say you're part of an organization that has headquarters in California, but the work is going to be conducted by an arm of the organization that is based in Pennsylvania, and all the audience that's served is by the work will be located in Pennsylvania, then the project would be eligible.

We anticipate this priority to be very competitive, like the recent competitions we've offered that were similar. Because we anticipate a large number of projects requesting funding to priority one, there is a pre-application requirement. Pre-applications are brief project narratives, and do not require the full suite of federal forms to be submitted.

The pre-applications will be merit-reviewed, and only the most highly ranked pre-applications will be authorized to submit a full application. We do this to minimize the work we have to do, given the anticipated competitiveness of this funding opportunity.

For example, in 2020, the last time we ran one of these competitions, we received 163 pre-applications, 46 of which were authorized to submit a full application. We funded six awards

over two fiscal years. Despite anticipating having a bit more funding in this coming fiscal year, we still expect a high - similar high level of competitiveness.

In this telecon, we will focus on the aspects that are relevant to the pre-application process. So, the first tip is, make sure you read the entire funding announcement or NOFO. The first several pages of this NOFO are basically an abstract or a summary of the rest of the document.

So, we're going to skip covering those, and we're going to start on Page 6 of the full announcement text. So, I'm looking at the PDF starting on Page 6. And what we're going to do is, we're just going to have - the three program officers are just going to highlight, and in some cases, read verbatim to you, different sections of the NOFO that we really want to draw your attention to.

So, I'm going to start with that on Page 6. So, in the program objective section, since the program's inception, the Environmental Literacy Program grants, have supported formal and informal education activities at local, regional, and national levels, to address NOAA's mission of science, service, and stewardship.

This mission is directed toward a vision of the future where communities and their ecosystems are healthy and resilient in the face of sudden or prolonged change. It is indisputable that human activities are causing climate change, and that these activities have warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land, at an unprecedented rate in the last 2000 years.

As a result, extreme climate events, including heatwaves, heavy rainfall, and droughts, are now more frequent and severe. I'm now on Page 7. In the US, we've observed changes, and climate impacts include, but are not limited to, severe storms, hurricanes, flooding, heavy precipitation events, persistent droughts, heatwaves, wildfires, increased global temperatures, acidification of the ocean, and sea-level rise.

The United States is experiencing a rising number of costly and damaging weather and climate events. Climate change threatens human health and safety, ecosystem health, and social and economic well-being. The geographic distribution of climate change impacts is

uneven, and longstanding socioeconomic inequities heighten vulnerabilities for underserved groups.

These threats become even greater with the increasing rates of greenhouse gas emissions. To prepare for a future of increase in climate impacts, communities need to implement more policies and practices that allow their members, regardless of socioeconomic status, to thrive and be resilient.

These policies and practices should be informed by engaged community members and leaders who understand the causes of climate change and its impact on their own lives and in the future. Decisions about how to build more resilient and equitable communities, should be based on scientific, traditional, and community knowledge, and represent the values of society, because this contributes to better accepted and more robust policies.

Increasing environmental literacy among community members, ensures that they comprehend the complex ways that human and natural systems interact, both globally and locally, and have the required skills, motivation, and confidence, to participate in decisions that inform public policies affecting their lives.

The paragraph that is at the very bottom of Page 7 and spans on to Page 8, I'm not going to read it to you, but this is the paragraph where we emphasize why it's important for projects to focus on climate change solutions, and getting participants to take action, as opposed to focusing on building understanding of climate change.

So, now on the second paragraph of Page 8. For these reasons, NOAA's Environmental Literacy Program grant competition, has since 2015, concentrated on community resilience education, and funded approaches that are climate solutions-oriented, locally focused, and engage, educate, and empower participants to take action individually and collectively.

Based on data and knowledge coming from funded projects and literature sources, in 2020, the Environmental Literacy Program developed and published NOAA's Community Resilience Education Theory of Change. This framing document provides a conceptual framework for the ways in which community resilience education can lead to increased

community engagement and civic action, ultimately leading to a healthier, more resilient, and equitable society.

As such, it lays out many important concepts, definitions, outcomes, and goals that structure this grant program, including the goal of this funding opportunity. The goal of this funding opportunity, is for communities to have sufficient collective environmental literacy to take action and build resilience to extreme weather and climate change, in ways that contribute to community health, social cohesion, and socioeconomic equity.

These communities are composed of children, youth, and adults, who participate in formal and or informal education experiences that develop their knowledge, skills, and confidence to reason about the ways that human and natural systems interact globally and locally, including the acknowledgement of disproportionately distributed vulnerabilities, participate in civic processes, and incorporate scientific information, cultural knowledge, and diverse community values in decision-making.

Efforts to build environmental literacy should ultimately aim to reduce risks from current and future environmental hazards, through climate smart and inclusive decision-making, and long-term stewardship of healthy ecosystems, all the while promoting a low carbon economy.

So, this last paragraph here before the description of project activities, is an essential paragraph because it describes the goal of the funding opportunity. So, if your project is not aligned with this paragraph, among others, this is probably not a good fit for your project.

And one thing I want to call out is that we are not funding research with this funding opportunity. Okay. I'm going to hand it over to my colleague, Sarah, who walk you through the next part.

Sarah Schoedinger: Thanks, Carrie. Okay. So, I'm at the bottom of Page 8 in the section that starts, description of project activities. Projects should develop the collective environmental literacy necessary for communities to take actions that build resilience to extreme weather and climate change, in ways that contribute to community health, social cohesion, and socioeconomic equity. NOAA's Community Resilience Education Theory of Change, should be used to inform key aspects of the project, including its design and logic model.

Moving to the next paragraph on Page 9, the Theory of Change also includes many important definitions, including a definition for community resilience education. I am not going to read that definition. It is the next section of this paragraph, but you definitely want to become familiar with it, as it is core to our NOFO's goal.

Moving a little further down into that paragraph, I should note that each individual in a community does not need to develop their skills - their knowledge, skills, and confidence to the same extent. But the community should collectively and sufficiently have these capabilities for use in resilience-building initiatives.

So, this is what we mean by collective environmental literacy here. The Theory of Change describes the characteristics of community resilience education projects. And the following paragraph describes how those projects should attempt to incorporate these characteristics.

One other thing I want to note about the Theory of Change is that it does not comprehensively cover every way in which education can or could play a role in building community resilience. So, if your project plans to implement activities that are not well represented in the Theory of Change currently, please include a justification for that as part of your application.

Okay, next paragraph. Projects should support diversity, equity, inclusion, and climate justice in all aspects of the project, i.e. target audiences, partners, project leadership team, the location of the project, and its potential impacts, and the use of culturally appropriate approaches.

Particular attention should be paid to community members that have a greater exposure to and fewer resources to deal with the extreme weather and or climate change impacts that are the focus of the proposed project. Relevant socioeconomic, cultural, and ecological factors in the location or locations, should be described, as well as the culturally appropriate approaches.

Projects should demonstrate how they will engage community members in social and active learning. Social learning is learning that occurs within social units or communities of practice

through social interactions between individuals within social networks. Active learning is a process whereby learners actively construct new ideas, perspectives, understanding, and so forth, and or reconstruct, add to, or completely dismantle old ideas.

I'm now at the top of Page 10. Active and social learning often go hand-in-hand. These learning approaches such as citizen science, deliberative forum, participatory decision-making, and mapping exercises, and scenario-based or role-playing activities and games, emphasize exploring and implementing community-scale solutions, and create venues for social learning to take place.

So, those last few sentences I just read, help you describe these two terms, and we've provided a couple of references in the text here and there, you can figure out where to find them at the end of the NOFO. And we also have a definitions section where those are unpacked.

Moving down to the next paragraph, projects should promote action by the target audiences by facilitating opportunities for civic engagement and empowering participants to be agents of change. These approaches should work to inspire hope in the target audiences.

Projects should support local and State-based efforts to increase resilience, by using relevant regional, State, and or local resilience plans, and partnering with institutions and individuals, including, but not limited to, resilience practitioners, who are involved in efforts to develop or implement those plans.

Projects may focus on a single location or multiple locations. They should focus on the most pertinent current and future environmental hazard or range of hazards that impact the community or communities in the selected location. So, you can focus on one hazard in one community and - or one hazard in multiple communities. You can have two or more hazards in a single community, or multiple hazards in multiple communities. Those are the range of options that can be covered by your proposed project.

The selected hazards should be informed by the regional, State, and or local resilience plans that are being incorporated into your project. Projects should be also - should be based on the

established scientific evidence regarding current and future extreme weather and climate impacts facing the target community or communities.

In addition to natural science information, projects should incorporate knowledge about local social, cultural, historical, and economic factors that mediate participants' capacity to reason about the ways human and natural systems interact. And finally, projects should focus on solutions and their inherent trade-offs, in ways that clearly foster the implementation of those solutions within their community or communities.

I'm now down at the bottom of Page 10. Projects may consider incorporating proposed activities that will build knowledge, skills, and competencies that are transferable to climate-resilient careers, and may also help target audiences - help the target audiences develop personal agency to affect change in their communities.

Although such work is not currently a direct focus of a causal pathway within our Theory of Change, rapid decarbonization of our economy, will require many more workers trained in these areas. So, preparing more people to be able to pursue these careers, will economically empower them. It is also important that the future resilient workforce reflects the diversity of US communities, as this will help achieve equitable resilience.

I'm now at the top of Page 11. Please note, there may be additional funding available for projects that implement the proposed Civilian Climate Corps Initiative that was called for in executive order number 14008. Applicants or partners could be existing core network members or other organizations that offer paid training, career skills development, and or job pathways into climate resilience careers. Minimally, projects should include information for target audiences on possible climate resilience-related careers, and pathways that lead to those careers.

I'm now going down to the third paragraph. In addition, projects must utilize NOAA's scientific data, data access tools, data visualizations, and or other physical and intellectual assets available on these topics, for example, the US Climate Resilience Toolkit. In order to facilitate the use of NOAA's assets, projects are strongly encouraged to partner with relevant NOAA entities, meaning offices or program, and or NOAA employees and affiliates.

And there are a couple of URLs that follow that can provide you access to additional information on those data assets and those programs and experts you might want to involve in your project. There are a number of NOAA programs that offer a significant amount of climate science and resilience expertise. So, applicants are encouraged to consider involving representatives from these programs as project advisors or partners.

And I'm now down on the last paragraph on the page, Page 11. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review community resilience education projects funded by this program since 2015, and proposed projects should be informed by the lessons learned from these grantees.

Every 18 to 24 months, NOAA convenes our grantees to share ideas, best practices, and lessons learned from their NOAA-funded resilience education projects. And so, to ensure your project benefits from the latest learning from the ELP community of practice, please see the 2021 NOAA Environmental Literacy Program Resilience Education Grantee Workshop report, and the URL follows where you can access that report.

I'm now at the top of Page 12. So, let's move on to target audiences. I'm going to go through this section pretty thoroughly because this is pretty important for your project. Target audiences for this funding opportunity are children, youth, and or adults. And they also include informal - may include informal educators, including interpreters and docents, and formal educators, pre or in service, and also school administrators.

Professionals already working in the area of community resilience and higher education students, are not target audiences for this funding opportunity. However, those latter two groups can serve as members of the project team and receive funding for their efforts. Education includes lifelong learning that occurs within formal grades, K-12 system, and outside of it.

There is no single ideal age to engage. Rather, audiences engaged will vary by community and the hazards being faced. Therefore, you don't need to try to engage children, youth, and adults, unless your project calls for it, but we do expect you to target your audience appropriately to the needs of the community you're serving, and the hazards that you're going to focus on.

There is a particular interest in projects that specifically engage underserved members of the community, defined here as people who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, who are also highly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

A recent report from the EPA of which groups are most vulnerable to climate change impacts, and we provided a link to that report on Page 47 of this NOFO. These underserved and highly vulnerable community members face greater exposure to extreme weather and climate change impacts, and they have fewer resources to prepare for and adapt to the associated risks.

Projects should employ approaches and partnerships that are appropriate for the targeted underserved and highly vulnerable population. Therefore, moving down to the next paragraph, projects are strongly encouraged to develop meaningful partnerships with community-based organizations or CBOs, particularly those from underserved and highly vulnerable communities within the area or areas served by the project.

CBO partners should contribute to the conceptualization of the project, as well as the implementation, and may be part of the project leadership or advisory teams. A little further down, please note, adequate compensation should be provided for community-based organization partners and community members for the efforts they are contributing to the project.

I'm at the bottom of Page 12 now. Applicants are encouraged to use demographic weather and climate data as a basis for determining where work will occur, and the audience this work will serve, and describe how these data were used to support programmatic decisions. I'm now at the top of Page 13.

Very briefly, I just want to mention that all projects should include an evaluation component. However, in the pre-application phase, there is no requirement to describe any evaluation plan. So, if you get to the full application stage of this process, you will need to pay attention to the rest of this page, but for now, I'm going to skip over to Page 14.

Similarly, Section 5 here on dissemination of project results and products, I'm not going to read through that right now. This is not something you need to be worried about for your pre-app. But it is something that will be considered in the full application phase.

So moving onto paragraph six down here on award date submission goal. Just want to highlight that we anticipate funding awards under this announcement no later than September 30, 2022. And also any projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2022. You can have a start date later than October 1, 2022. But we don't want to see any prior to that.

And now at the bottom of Page 14. And I'm going to go on to program priorities. First, let me just note that this funding opportunity has two priorities and they are of equal importance in terms of funding. The priority number is not an indication, actually, of the importance as far as the funding is concerned.

Priority one awards will support new projects taking place in the Central and Eastern Regions of the United States. And while I know Carrie read this off before, it's important so I'm going to read this off again. These regions include the following states: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The entirety of the project must only serve audiences located in one or more of the listed states.

And just to remind you, that is not a restriction on where the submitting organization must be located. This has to do with where your audiences are being served. This is important because this is an eligibility criterion.

I'm going to skip the next couple paragraphs because they're about priority two awards or applications. So I'm now down at - toward the bottom of the page, just above program authority. And just want to note that an applicant may only submit a given project idea to one priority or the other.

So in the event that a project is proposed to both priorities, our staff will contact the applying institution and ask which application should be withdrawn.

So at this stage, I'm going to stop and I'm going to turn things over to my colleague, John McLaughlin.

John McLaughlin: Thanks, Sarah. I'm going to start on Section 2, Award Information, which is on the bottom of Page 15, top of Page 16. And I'll be covering Sections 2, 3, which comprise the remainder of this Notice of Funding Opportunity and a total of 35 pages. But don't worry, I will only focus on the sections most relevant to priority one pre-applications.

So starting with 2(a), funding availability. NOAA anticipates that approximately $5 million may be available in Fiscal Year 2022 for this announcement. Approximately 7 to 12 awards among both priorities in the form of cooperative agreements will be made in Fiscal Year 2022.

For those of you who are not familiar with cooperative agreements, they are an award instrument that provides financial assistance and has substantial involvement of the agency making them. We use this instrument since NOAA will have involvement in any project funded.

Offerings applications not funded in the current fiscal year may be considered for funding in Fiscal Year 2023 without NOAA repeating the cooperative - the competitive process outlined in this announcement. All projects in both priorities must be between two and five years in duration and the total federal amount requested from NOAA for each project must be no less than $250,000 and no more than $500,000 for all years of the project. And that includes direct and indirect costs.

Coming down to Section 3 on Page 17, eligible - Eligibility Information and Eligible Applicants. For both priorities of this funding opportunity, eligible applicants are limited to institutions of higher education, K-12, public and independent schools and school systems, other nonprofits, including community-based organizations and informal education institutions such as museums, zoos, and aquariums, state and local government agencies and Indian tribal governments in the United States. For-profit organizations, foreign institutions,

and individuals are not eligible to apply. However, for-profit organizations, foreign institutions, and individuals may participate as private partners. Likewise, federal agencies are not eligible to receive federal assistance under this announcement but may be project partners.

As Sarah said and Carrie has said, the entirety of a project must only serve audiences located in one or more of the states listed here. Inclusion of a location not in this list of states will result in disqualification of the pre-application and full application to this priority.

You're strongly encouraged that an individual serve as a PI on only one application submitted to this funding opportunity. Institutions may submit more than one application and individuals may serve as co-PIs or key personnel on more than one application. Federal employees may not serve as PIs or co-PIs on any application, although they may be included as key personnel.

Moving down to 4(b), Cost-Sharing and Matching Requirements. There is no cost-sharing requirement.

Section C, Other Criteria that Affects Eligibility, pre-applications and full applications must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section 4(d). Late pre-applications will not be considered for funding. Submission time will be documented by electronic submission to grants.gov.

And note, we do not accept any other type of submission, except through grants.gov. So, unfortunately, you're not able to email us files or anything of that nature.

On to Section 4, The Address to Request an Application Package. Pre-application and full application packages including required federal forms and instructions are available through grants.gov. Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for the process, applicants should register as soon as they decide they intend to apply even if they are not yet ready to submit their pre-applications.

Grants.gov will not accept applications if the applicant has not been authorized or credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan accordingly to avoid problems with the submission process. None of us want an application to be stalled due to problems with the submission process. So please keep heed that warning and plan accordingly.

If any applicant has problems downloading a pre-application or full application forms from grants.gov, uploading the pre-application or full application into grants.gov system, or using the grants.gov workspace feature, please contact the grants.gov customer support at the phone number and email address provided here.

I will note that we in the Office of Education do not have access to the same view that you see within grants.gov, so we are not as well equipped to work through any issues you may have as the grants.gov help desk. So for any grants.gov issues, please do make the grants.gov help - Customer Service Team your first go-to.

So onto Section B, The Content Form of the Application. For priority one, each application must submit a pre-application through grants.gov for review. Pre-applications are required to prevent the expenditure of effort on full applications that are not likely to be successful. All applicants will receive a response to their pre-application via email from NOAA indicating whether or not they are authorized to submit a full application for the project. Only those institutions that receive authorization from NOAA are eligible to submit a full application. Failure of an applicant to submit a pre-application or a full application before the deadline will result in the project not being merit reviewed or receiving any additional consideration.

And you can see the Office of Education's Frequently Asked Questions web sites for more detail. Note that there are two links provided here. You want to follow the first link for priority one Frequently Asked Questions.

We are now going to come down to the format requirements. And I won't read them to you. I will just note that there are format requirements for your application to adhere to. So, unfortunately, no going to 8. or 6. font to try to squeeze in more information.

All right, onto Section B, Content Requirement. Each pre-application must contain the following three elements. In SF-424 Form, which is the Application for Federal Assistance, a title page. And we provide a title page template to you at the URL provided here. Whether or not the title template is used is optional. But the title page must be submitted and contain all of the following elements. Number one, the project title. Number two, the proposed start and end dates.

Number three, the funding amount requested from NOAA. Number four, the priority in which the application is being submitted. Number five, principal investigator, PI and co-PI names, affiliations, email addresses, and telephone numbers. The PI listed on the title page should be affiliated with the institution submitting the pre-application. Number six, an Executive Summary, which is limited to 150 words.

Number seven, a list of project partners, including all partners. Number eight, a list of NOAA assets that will be integrated into the project activities to achieve the project's goals and objectives. And we do provide a URL to a resilient asset page. That is a major resource for finding the assets and may be appropriate for integration to your project. And finally, Number nine, you need to describe the location of where your project will take place, including all the states and territories where the audiences will be served. And again, this is critical for - you provide this information accurately on your title page because we will be determining if your project is eligible or not based on this information.

You also need to include a project description which has a four-page limit. And this section should expand on the project's Executive Summary to describe the project more clearly. There should be a clear, concise, and well-supported statement of the project's rationale, citing any relevant front-end evaluation or other needs assessment. The rationale should include how this - the goal of this funding opportunity will be met as described in Section 1(a). There's additional detail for what your project description should include. Please do note it all as this content is what your project will be reviewed on.

Also note, project descriptions that exceed the four-page law that will be truncated beyond the fourth page and the information that is sent forward to reviewers. Additional note that pre-applications that do not submit - that pre-applications do not have to submit budget

descriptions or justifications beyond providing a funding request number on the title page and SF-424 Form.

I'm now going to jump to Section 4(d), Submission Dates and Times, which is in the middle of Page 30. So I'll give you all a second to get there and myself if I can get there as well.

All right, so submission dates and times. For priority one, the deadline for pre-application is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on November 1, 2021. As Sarah and Carrie already noted, this is the first of two informational teleconferences for priority one pre-applications. The second one will be a replicate covering the same content. So unless you want to hear us read it all again, you do not need to participate in that second one.

All right, please note, I'm going to come down to Section G now, Other Submission Requirements. And note that it may take grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject your submission. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required elements have been appropriately submitted before the deadline. Again, there's nothing worse for us than having an application not make it through the required submission process by the required time. So even though it's not always easiest, please do plan ahead and consider submitting well before the due date so that you don't run into any submission problems or complications right at the very end.

Coming down to Section 5 now and evaluation criteria. I'm not going to read the evaluation criteria to you. But do note there are different criteria for pre-applications as opposed to full applications. Make sure to consider this as you prepare your project description, as they will be the criteria the reviewers use to review your pre-application.

I'm now going to go down to Section 5(b), Review and Selection Process in the middle of Page 35. All right, so review and selection process. Upon receipt of an application by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with the minimum requirements.

And the minimum requirements for priority one pre-applications include all of the following: That the applicant is eligible to apply, the applicant has submitted the required project

narrative and title page, the entirety of the project is only serving audiences located in one or more of the eligible states as described in Section 3(a), Eligible Applicants. And we judge that by the location of where your project will take place field on the title page. The total federal request for all years of the project requested is no more than $500,000 and no less than $250,000. And finally, that the pre-application was received on time.

So again, please make sure your pre-application submission meets all of those requirements so we are able to send it forward to review.

Coming down now to a small Section (a), Pre-applications. All three applications that meet eligibility and minimum requirements will be evaluated and scored by a group of independent reviewers each having an expertise in a separate area so that the reviewers, as a whole, cover the spectrum of activities covered by the pre-applications received. Each application will be reviewed by at least three reviewers. A rank order of all pre-applications will be established by averaging the individual review ratings for each pre-application. The Program Office Staff will look for a substantial break in scores of the rank-ordered pre-applications to determine the final number authorized to submit full applications. At least 45 pre-applications will be authorized to submit full applications.

We, federal partner officers, will make our recommendations to the selecting official, the Director of NOAA Education, on whether or not to authorize a full application based on the rank order and the selection factors listed in the next section 5(c).

Applicants will be notified of the status of their pre-application via email to the authorized representative on or about January 18, 2022. Full applications from applicants who are not asked to submit them will not be reviewed.

Now, I'm going to go down to Section 7, Agency Contacts. And this section is on Page 43. And you can contact our Environmental Literacy Program Grant Team at oed.grants@noaa.gov. And we please ask that you use that one email address as our team is making sure to check at all times and we can assure a more timely response than if you email any one of us individually. For further information, please also see the information we provide, such as our Frequently Asked Questions and apply page. And you can visit our office web site at noaa.gov/office-education.

Please do reveal this information - this funding opportunity and the information provided on our web sites before contacting us with questions so that we can best deal with the volume of questions we receive.

I'll note that we also have a Definition and References Section. But I will not read those to you. Instead, I will turn things over to my colleague Carrie.

Carrie McDougall: Thanks, John. So that was our tedious overview of the funding announcement, so hopefully, you have a better sense of what we're seeking if you hadn't had a chance to read it yet. But we still hope that you will read it completely.

But now we'd like to take your questions. So the Operator will provide instructions about how to put yourself in the queue so you can ask your question through the phone line.

Coordinator: Thank you. We will now begin the question and answer session. If you'd like to ask a question, please press star 1, un-mute your phone and record your name clearly. Your name is required to introduce your question. If you need to withdraw your question, press star 2. Again, to ask a question, please press star 1. It'll take a few moments for the questions to come through. Please stand by. Our first question is from (xx). Go ahead, your line is open.

(xx):   Hi. I was wondering if you guys would share about whether or not the project funding request that you get in terms of the dollar amount, will you be only fully funding projects, or will partial funding be provided in some cases? And if so, can you also share a little bit about your suggestions or recommendation for how much money a project should be asking for?

Sarah Schoedinger: I'll attempt to answer your question and allow my other colleagues to chime in as needed. You are allowed and it's anticipated that you will ask for funding between the limits we provided, $250,000 to $500,000. We have in the past partially funded projects. But it's really determined - if we've lowered the funding amount, sometimes we've been forced to do that, for instance, like a 10% cut because we just ended up not having the budget we had hoped for in a given year.

And so when that happens, we handle that during the negotiation phase of an award, which means there's a back and forth. We would - you would have the reviewers comment. Sometimes we might suggest removal of a particular component of a project if reviewers recommended that and we agreed with that.

But that's all part of a negotiation that happens after we've made a decision to move forward with your award. At this stage in the pre-application phase, we're really just wanting to get a ballpark figure of how much you think your project should need. And it's a bit premature at this stage for us to be able to say, like, how much funding would end up actually being given to a particular award.

(xx):   Okay, thank you.

Carrie McDougall: If you're asking the question in a different way, meaning like you have a $1 million project that you want to propose and we're setting the limit at $500,000, therefore, you can only request funding for like half of the project, that is not something we generally like to see. We like to fund projects in their entirety.

Now, if you are able to bring funding in from another source, so say you have a $1 million project and you're going to split it between two funding sources and you have the other funding identified, that would be something you could describe in your project narrative and describe, you know, we would just need to see very discrete portions attributed to the NOAA funding.

(xx):   Great, thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (xx). Go ahead, your line is open.

(xx):   Hi, folks. Thank you so much. This is a really, really exciting grant opportunity, I have to say. For the - we're thinking of applying for a project that works with Latinx folks in manufactured housing communities in Colorado.

And we are collaborating with a whole bunch of other university and municipal and folks in addition to the residents of multiple manufactured housing communities.

Is there a minimum budget size for the CBO if the CBO is going to be an applicant organization or should we really look for another partner?

And I'm saying that because, and maybe other people are facing this, too, is that when a university applies often 50%, or in our case, 52% of the money goes to the university for overhead. And we would just assume give that to our community folks, if possible, to be greedy, quite frankly. So is there a minimum budget size for the CBO if that's an applicant organization?

Carrie McDougall: Do you mean if the CBO is the applicant?

(xx):   Yes. So for example, we collaborate with all kinds of on-campus, off-campus, municipal, etcetera, folks. And if we apply, we'd be putting together another partnership to do this. And so we're trying to figure out, like, who should be the applicant basically. Is there a minimum budget size?

Carrie McDougall: I have a couple of thoughts. So one is we did this with our last round of funding for a couple of our grants. The community-based partners were funded through the primary organization, the applicant, using stipends.

And when that's done, the primary organization cannot apply the overhead. And so...that is one way to get around the overhead issue. And, you know, the use of stipend depends on the nature of the relationship. So it's on a case-by-case basis.

But in terms of a community-based organization applying directly, they're certainly eligible if they, you know, are a nonprofit organization. And the minimum that they could request would be $250,000. However, you would want to make sure that that organization would have the capacity to manage the award.

So if you were going to sort of turn the tables and have the CBO be the primary and then the university would be a sub-recipient, does the CBO have the capability to manage as a primary organization and then also dole out sub-awards to the partners because that's kind of a heavy lift. There's lots of federal requirements for that.

So I would be looking at the capacity of those potentially smaller organizations and will they be able to manage, you know, potentially a $5 million federal award (unintelligible).

(xx): Right. Yes, that makes sense. Yes, that makes sense. .And so will you take in - I wasn't quite - I didn't quite get it. So with this particular grant, if there are CBO stipends or, yes, does that mean that they don't have to take in overhead? I mean, we don't have to pay them overhead if they agree, of course, or...

Carrie McDougall: Yes. It means that the overhead the university has could not come out of the amount that's being given to the community-based partnership if it's being given as a stipend.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (xx).

(xx): Thank you so much. I actually have a couple of questions. I'll - if I only get one, though, I have to say that the description for this grant describes my organization's entire mission, like all our programs and projects support environmental literacy. Can the project proposed be our non-profit organization, or should I be selecting out one aspect of our program from the overall suite of programs that we offer?

John McLaughlin: This funding opportunity is specifically for projects that have the following aspects. And if that - the project aligns with your organization's goals and mission, that is fantastic. But it would not be for just full organizational support. Rather, you'd have to craft a project that is responsive to what is described in the funding opportunity and then apply for that project.

(xx): Thank you so much. My other questions, I think, will be really quick. Is it advisable to connect with the NOAA employee in my state or is using NOAA resources for my state sufficient to apply?

Sarah Schoedinger: You must use NOAA resources, NOAA assets. We don't fund projects that don't use NOAA assets. You are not required to work with a NOAA person or office to use those assets. However, we have found that proposals are more competitive and they tend to have a higher (unintelligible) just in the, but in the actual implementation when there is, you know,

an office program or a person involved. So, but we don't make it a requirement that you have an individual or an office involved.

(xx): Thank you so much for that clarification. Finally, I looked at the application. It's not a writable document. Is that - am I lacking the proper tools? Or is that the way that it is?

Sarah Schoedinger: So your application is - you need to download it through Grants.gov, and you may have to open a Workspace. I hesitate to give too much advice here because I am not as familiar with the Grants.gov interface. You can - there are places where you will be able to attach a four-page project description, which, you know, you can put in Word or PDF. We don't really care.

But I - so hopefully that answers your question. You may need to play around a little bit with the Grants.gov Workspace if it's - if you're not able to enter information on it yet.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (xx). Go ahead. Your line is open.

(xx): Hello. Yes, hi. Thank you so much for this wonderful call. I had a quick question regarding the location. So we are based in California, but we're looking at a different organization based out of, you know, out of the states that are the listed states there, to actually implement that with teachers, with regard to teacher capacity building.

So in that case, you know, does this have to be a joint application? Who should be the primary applicant for the collaborative reapplying? So I just want to get some clarification on the different organization in that - one of those states. What's the best way to, you know, should be the primary? And if that is, you know, yes.

Sarah Schoedinger: Sure. I'll try to answer this. So as - we don't do collaborative applications where we sort of split the funding among two different projects or I'm sorry, two different entities that are partnering on a project. So there is - a single institution needs to be the submitting organization and the recipient of the award.

And then they can have sub awards or contracts to parse out the funding to partners as needed. As to who or which organization should be the submitting organization, that's really

for you all to determine. If, you know, if your organization based in California wants - it makes the most sense for you all to submit the application, you're allowed to do so as long as where the work is occurring is in one of those eligible states or the District of Columbia.

And so we're not going to be trying to police whether, you know, and we just frankly, there are a lot of reasons why it does not make sense for us to try and limit where the submitting organization is. Does that make sense?

(xx): Sure. Just to clarify, so if the organization, California - if the work is being done, distributed, but the actual implementation, you know, with the teachers, is happening...

Sarah Schoedinger: The audiences you are engaging, they need to be in one of those states. We realize if your organization's based in California you're going to be doing some work in California. But the actual implementation, the engagement of target audiences, that needs to be happening in one of those allowed states.

And we kind of have an example of this in a funded project from several years ago, where the submitting - the award recipient and the submitting organization, with the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, UCAR in Colorado. But the work and the target audiences - the target audiences being engaged, were based down in Houma, Louisiana.

And so there was some work occurring in Colorado because there's staff there. The majority of the work and implementation occurred in Houma, Louisiana. And so in this case, if Louisiana was a covered state they would have been eligible to apply even if Colorado wasn't.

(xx): Got it. Got it. All right, great. Thank you so much.

John McLaughlin: I would say one or more of the eligible states or the District of Columbia. So potentially you could have a project in say, Maine and Massachusetts, but it has to all be within one or more of the eligible states.

(xx): Yes. Got it. Okay. Thank you so much.

Coordinator: Our next question from xx. Go ahead. Your line is open.

(xx):   Hi. Another question I had, I forgot to ask, was do you have a quota or an idea of how many grants you want to give per state? And the reason I'm asking that is because we are based in Colorado; we have some really amazing, quite huge organizations like NCAR and UCAR. So if we know that they're applying we probably won't, because they're such a great NOAA grant receiver. So yes, so do you guys have a quota per state?

Sarah Schoedinger: No. We don't have a quota and we, you know, what we do is we look at where have we made investments in the past; where have we not made investments. And that's a huge piece of consideration for us when we're making a final decision. Because we typically have a whole lot more projects that are scoring very high than we have the funding to support.

                    So we have to employ other, they're called selection factors, to influence our decision. And so we look at where we've made investments in the past, and we also look at need, you know, in terms of who is really getting hit hard by these hazards right now. And do we have projects that are addressing those high-need areas?

                    So those are the factors. But we wouldn't look at it on an, you know, like institutional basis. So we wouldn't say oh, we funded UCAR before, we're not going to fund them again, if they have a highly scoring project. But, you know, we don't know who's going to apply. So, you know, if you want to talk to your colleagues at those other organizations, to see what they're planning. I hope that answers your question.

(xx):   Yes. No, I will. So thank you. Thanks.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (xx). Go ahead. Your line is open.

(xx):   Something I did not see in the FAQ site or during this talk, was if you're thinking about a project that's going to be more than one year, say two years, three years, four years, I understand that the budget overall total cost is between $250K and $500K.

                    But do you have any suggestions or recommendations about any limits per year for the budget within a multi-year project? Or if there's any issue about it being a multi-year project,

meaning it's possible that funding could be cut after one year, so you have to have something realistically completed by the end of the year and therefore maybe a two-year project, may be more feasible or smart at this point than a three to five-year project. Any insight you might have on that, please.

Sarah Schoedinger: Sure. We do not have any specific recommendation for how much funding you allocate per year for a multi-year project. I will say we're pretty conservative in terms of when we make commitments on new awards. So to date, we've never had to cut off an award with only partial funding midway through and we've had some pretty scary budget years.

That doesn't mean it will never happen. But - and we - I would say we don't necessarily expect that you're going to be able to have like a product by the end of year two. And we're going to prioritize projects that are, you know, have that in their proposal versus, you know, others that don't. You know, sometimes we have - most of our projects it seems, for this funding opportunity, occur roughly around three years in duration.

But some of them are - have been out as long as five years. And, you know, they taper down toward the end. But really, it's determined by what you think makes the most sense given the work that you want to do.

(xx):   I just wanted to thank you for that answer. And I'm sure other people on the call have had recent experiences where a two-year project or even a one-year project was cut short. So that was the reason I asked. But I appreciate your answer. It makes total sense.

(Maggie Allen):   I just wanted to clarify that we fund - the projects must be between two and five years in duration. So that is the - what you propose when you submit a pre-application. I just wanted to make sure we all - that was clarified.

(xx):   Yes. I understood the two-year minimum. But like I said, unfortunately some projects were cut short for other reasons in recent past. I just wanted to hear from you that that's not happening at your agency. Thank you.

Sarah Schoedinger: Yes. Thus far, it has not. And like I said, we really work hard to never have that happen, just because it's not good for anybody. It's not good for us and it's not good for those of you

or the - who are implementing projects or the audiences that you're serving. So, thanks for that insight though.

John McLaughlin: And regardless, I mean it - it has not happened to us in our NOAA environmental literacy program.

Sarah Schoedinger: Yes. Thanks, John.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (xx). Go ahead. Your line is open.

(xx):   Yes, hi. I just asked about our organization based in California. I had a follow up right there based on something that was mentioned in the earlier - I mean when you've gone through the requirements. So again, we have a smaller organization in California. We are a small nonprofit that's been around for a decade.

But the organization we're looking at partnering with is much larger. They've already had past experience with, you know, larger - handling larger grants. So I know you had mentioned somewhere in one of the responses that the capacity of the organization that's applying is also going to be taken into consideration.

So given that does that kind of already lean towards that organization being the primary one? You know, I just want to get your thoughts on, you know, what would position us in a strong way. Because really what we're doing very much lines up with everything that you have, you're looking for in the grant. It's just a matter of making sure we put our best foot forward here. So...

John McLaughlin: This is John. I would say that's a great question; something your team should consider. It does not have to be a large organization as the primary applicant. If your institution has the capacity to handle this level of federal award and to lead the project and implement it and you can make that case to reviewers, then I - then you're certainly eligible as a primary applicant.

If you look through our past awardees you will see a mixture of larger and smaller institutions as primary recipients. I hope that answers your question.

(xx): Okay. So you're not looking at past history of the kinds of amounts that you might have handled and so on, right, for the applicant, for the applying organization?

John McLaughlin: I mean you do have to demonstrate that you will have the capacity to run this type of project. So I think it's up to you to make that case, to the reviewers.

(Maggie Allen): I think we're also looking at, you know, structurally given the nature of the project, is the lead institution and therefore the PI, the one directing the work and then the partners are helping implement or helping advise the work. Whereas if you submit it sort of the other way around it might create awkwardness in terms of now you have like an implementing partner who's directing an organization that really is the director. You know, so that could create sort of some questions in the reviewer's mind.

(xx): Yes. You really nailed that because I think that's kind of what we're looking at. We are the ones who are driving that but then we are the smaller one. So that's where the question came around the point it made. But I'll take a look at the list of organizations and certainly, you know, apply for that. Thank you.

Coordinator: I'm showing no further questions at this time. Again, as a reminder, please press star 1 on your phone and record your name, if you have a question. One moment, please. I'm showing no further questions at this time.

Carrie McDougall: Okay. So we're going to go ahead and wrap up the call. Thank you so much for participating and paying attention and for some great questions. And again, we want to restate the importance of reading the entire funding opportunity notice. And we also want to remind you of the resources that are available on our Resilience Hub.

Again, we anticipate this priority will be very competitive, so please make sure you're following all of the instructions to make your application as competitive as possible. If you do find you have additional questions after this teleconference today, and after you've read the NOFO thoroughly, take a look at our frequently asked questions page and see if your question is answered there.

And then if you still find you have a question, please email us at OED Grants, OED.Grants@NOAA.gov. That's also the email that's published in the funding opportunity. And again, if you have technical issues with Grants.gov, please don't hesitate to contact our customer support through their Web site. And again, we'll post the transcription of this teleconference by September 30th, on our Program Apply page.

And thanks again for your attention today. So we are signing off now. And I hope you have a good rest of your day. Bye-bye.

END